

Heathgate Medical Practice Self-care leaflet – Dry eyes

This range of leaflets created by our clinical team provide useful information on a range of conditions that can in most cases be managed by patients at home. Where symptoms persist after a period of self-care or after advice from the local pharmacist, you should consider calling the surgery.

Dry eyes can present as gritty and or watery eyes. Your eyes can look normal but occasionally red and inflamed. Occasionally, sticky discharge can prevent and mimic an infection.

The causes of dry eyes and how the symptoms can be managed

There are numerous reasons, including:

- Allergies – avoiding the triggers are the mainstay for this cause. You should try using antihistamine eye drops which can be purchased from a local pharmacy. The pharmacist will be able to advise of the most appropriate one for you.
- Blepharitis – this is the medical term for a blockage of the tiny glands that run along the inside of the eyelids. This happens when the oil, which is needed to create the normal tear drops, is reduced leaving you with watery tears, which can leave the eyes feeling gritty and dry. The best remedy for this is to dampen the eyes with a warm flannel on a daily basis at night and then using blepharitis wipes which can be purchased from a local pharmacy or supermarket. The warm flannel and the wipes softens the blockages in the glands.
- Infection – discharge and or redness in the eyes which does not improve with bathing using very lightly salted water should be discussed with a local pharmacist who can provide an over the counter eye drop. The exception here is young children who should see a healthcare professional.

When you should contact a healthcare professional

If you have tried the options outlined above, or the symptoms do not improve, or regularly return, then a routine appointment should be booked with a clinician at the surgery.

Long term dry eyes may require a referral to the ophthalmology department at the hospital for further specialist assessment.

Further advice on eye care (including blepharitis) is available at www.nhs.uk